

Heart Healthy Eating

Blood Fats

Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a fat naturally found in our bodies. It is made by the liver and also found in some foods we eat. Our bodies need a small amount of cholesterol to function properly, but too much can cause a build up that blocks blood vessels. This build up can lead to a heart attack or stroke. There are 2 main types of cholesterol in your blood:

LDL-Cholesterol or “Lousy” Cholesterol

- LDL leaves cholesterol in your blood vessels, which can lead to blocked blood vessels.
- High levels of LDL are unhealthy for your heart.

HDL-Cholesterol or “Healthy” Cholesterol

- HDL moves cholesterol out of your blood vessels and to the liver to be removed from your body.
- High levels of HDL are good for you heart.

Triglycerides

Triglycerides are a third type of fat in your blood. They are made from the sugar, fat, and alcohol you eat or drink. High levels of triglycerides are bad for your heart.

You can lower your triglyceride levels by:

- Losing 5-10% of excess weight
- Eating fewer foods with added sugar such as candy, juice, and pop
- Avoiding trans fats, and eating more omega-3 fats
- Reducing the amount of alcohol you drink

Food Fats

Eating more heart healthy fats can help:

- Lower your LDL and triglyceride levels
- Raise your HDL levels

Fats to Avoid

Saturated fats are found in meat, butter, full fat dairy products, palm oil, and coconut oil. Too much saturated fat can raise your LDL cholesterol levels.

Tips to reduce saturated fat:

- Use non-hydrogenated (soft) margarine instead of butter.
- Trim visible fat off red meat and pork, and remove skin on chicken.
- Choose 1% or 2% milk and low fat yogurt.

Trans fats are made through industrial processes. They are found in hard margarine, shortening, and high fat commercial foods such as cakes, cookies, and crackers. Trans fats can raise LDL cholesterol levels, but also lower HDL cholesterol levels. Avoid eating any trans fats if possible.

Heart Healthy Fats

Heart health fats include monounsaturated, polyunsaturated, and omega-3 fats.

Monounsaturated fats are found in canola and olive oil, nuts, and non-hydrogenated (soft) margarines.

Polyunsaturated fats are found in sunflower and soybean oil, chia seeds, nuts, and non-hydrogenated (soft) margarines.

Omega-3 fats are particularly good at lowering triglyceride levels. The best source is fatty fish such as salmon, trout, and tuna; but they are also found in flaxseeds and walnuts.

Tips to reduce trans fat:

- Use only non-hydrogenated (soft) margarine or plant oils.
- Avoid deep fried foods or commercial baked goods.
- Read nutrition labels and choose foods with 0 grams of trans fats.

Heart Healthy Shopping Tips

Buy Lean Meat

- Pick lean meats like chicken and turkey.
- When buying red meat look for lean cuts of meat like sirloin, or top round. Choose cuts that are graded “Choice” or “Select” instead of “Prime”, these tend to have less fat.

Dairy Products

- Choose Low fat dairy options, like low fat yogurt and reduced fat cheese.
- Pick skim, 1% or 2 % milk.

Buy Fibre Rich Foods

Fibre can be beneficial to heart health because it can help lower blood cholesterol and triglycerides.

- Fresh vegetables and fruits are good sources of fibre.
- Look for whole grain products.
- Try including oats and barley into your diet.
- Read the nutrition labels on packaged foods. Choose foods with more than 4 grams of fibre per serving size.

When Buying Packaged Foods

- Limit the amount of refined foods like sugary drinks, processed meats like bacon, and snack foods you eat.
- Read the nutrition label and choose foods with very low amounts of saturated fats and no trans-fat.
- Choose foods with lower amounts of sugar, and higher amounts of fibre (at least 4 grams per serving).